

C. H. S.

BANDWAGON

FIRST OF MAY, 1953

15c



JOE ROSSI

Director Mills Bros. Circus Band

See Story on Page 3

———— The Circusiana Magazine ————

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15c a single copy
\$1.25 a year in U.S.A.

Advertising rates--
\$1.00 per col. inch

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zine must be secured from both author
and publisher.

The Editor Says

Don't you meet the most won-
derful people on a circus lot?
Every year you make more friends
when you visit the back yard--
not only the performers but the
circus lovers as well. We, the
Kings, usually scatter somewhat
on the lot so that we all meet
different people and then for
days we compare notes. I think
many wives don't know what they
are missing by not at least oc-
casionally going along and find-
ing out that there are other
people who are just as daffy a-
bout the circus as their husbands
are. As for myself--I'm always
being asked if I just come along
to keep the family together. I
always answer, "No, I like to
come for my own love of the cir-
cus, and to meet new people."
Of course, it isn't always prac-
tical to go as often as your Secre-
tary does (anyone with a popular
teen age daughter knows what I
mean). Nevertheless, I was still
on the lot when the Mills tent
came down in Greenville and
Richmond.

HELP WANTED

Why don't you send in some-
thing for the Bandwagon. Again,
this season send in about the cir-
cuses you visit so that we can
compare notes. Also, I would
like to publish routes when I can
get them. Send me a copy of
your route cards (other than
Mills) and when we go to press
we will put in what will be cur-
rent. Also--some of you old
timers, we need more historical
data.

Circus Music a Real Challenge

Reprinted from 1953 Mills Bros. Program

The life of a circus musician may not be a soft touch, either musically or physically speaking,—but he wouldn't trade it! Joseph Rossi, maestro of the Silver Star Band of the Mills Bros. Three Ring Circus, is a case in point. Rossi, who came to this country in 1913 and has been playing sawdustland music for nearly 40 years, admits it is as much of an endurance contest as it has been painted. A circus band plays steadily for two hours at a clip, at all speeds from galops to waltzes, in all sorts of weather.

But there is a thrill to it and, today more than ever, it is a real challenge to a musician, says Rossi. 'Once, we used to play a march, 'Turkey in the Straw', a waltz, and some popular numbers. Programs were simple; noisy but hardly intricate.

"But today, playing a program as diversified and complete as this year's Mills Bros. performance requires a musical score more intricate than even grand opera or symphony concerts. We have to cut it fast. There are from 200-250 numbers in a single performance. There is jazz and popular music, symphonic strains, some opera, classical and semi-classical numbers, tangos, sambas, waltzes and dreamy stuff, marches,—a bit of everything. And it must be integrated to fit the ever-changing mosaic of acts and production numbers. It must express gayety, then speed, then suspense. There is no time to be bored,—or tired."

The Silver Star part of the Mills Bros. band name carries an especial story. It is in memory of Rossi's son, Mark, himself formerly a circus performer. He gave his life, at the age of 22, with the Army in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II and posthumously was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart. Father Joe carries these in his battered cornet case continually, and dedicates each musical program to his son's memory.

This year, the Mills Bros. band must play for the fullest variety of performers in its history—Chinese, Swedish, German, French, Italian, English, Spanish, South American, Greek, and other imported artists, plus American acts, animal turns and the new and elaborate ground and aerial production numbers for which original music was required. As Rossi puts it, it is a real challenge, but never a boring task.

We are glad to report that two of our ill members have been released from the hospital. Jim MacInnes was to get home around the 19th of April. Raymond White "Whitey" is also out of the hospital. Whitey feels better than he has for a long time and was well enough to enjoy eating in Mills Bros. Circus when they played Richmond, Indiana.

The Great Circus War, Hundred Years Ago

Sent in by Fritz Dillenberg, C.H.S. Member from Berlin

There are many most valuable circus books and reminiscences of the heyday of the circus in Germany in the library of Fritz Dillenberg's wellknown 'First German Circus Museum' in Berlin-Tegel, 21 Marzahn Strasse, but it is the one book Dillenberg and all admirers of his collection and the thousands circusfans cherish as the most valuable and absolutely unique item of all collections of this kind.

It is a handwritten volume, the diary of the once foremost and renowned French Circus of Louis Dejean, the diary that reflects the daily occurrences, the routine of the ring at the most crucial period of this famous circus. At the middle of the past century the French circuses, playing in Germany and especially in the then growing capital of the Prussian kingdom, Berlin, enjoyed undoubtedly the supremacy and had the greatest successes, owing to the brilliant performances, the luxurious *mis à Scne*, the unrivalled pompous shows and the great array of circus artists of that time. The German circuses, topped by the then already famous Ernst Renz Circus, could hardly compete with the splendours of the *Cirque Dejean*, and so it came to a strong and fierce struggle, fought by the energetic and optimistic Ernst Renz, when in the season 1851-1852 Louis Dejean let build a wooden circus construction in the center of Berlin, where Renz played at the same time not far away in another part of the town. Although Renz had not spared expenses and had booked a strong program with the best of circus acts and famous names, the pompous shows at the Dejean circus enthused the Berliners, especially the officers of the Prussian army and the society of Berlin. At first it looked Renz would lose his reputation, but he did not yield or succumb. The fight lasted for some months, Renz, not inclined to copy the French style at first, thought better and improved his shows, engaged the most famous stars of the ring, and slowly but steady the public opinion turned to Renz's favor.

The result was: The Dejean Circus ended the season before the scheduled time and left Berlin, leaving Renz to continue with his shows and acknowledged him as the victor of the fight. Since then Dejean never returned to Berlin and Renz's reputation as the foremost German circus was founded, and remained so for 40 years longer.

This period is covered in the aforesaid Ring Diary of Louis Dejean. To peruse this unique book of historical value is a rare pleasure to any circus fan and circus historian, as it recalls names that once, 100 years ago were famous all over the European continent, the cream of the circus artists of that time. All these names were household names then and all of them are still known today as grandfathers and grandmothers or great grandfathers of today's circus artists or managers. In Dejean's ring diary you read names that remind us of these great times for the circus, for instance: The 117th performance, Thursday, March 4. 1851 offered the appearance of

(Cont'd on page 5)

Mlle. Leopoldine Gaertner, who later married the Dutch Circus Owner Oscar Carré, also Mdme. Tourniair, the grandmother of Jean Houcke, the still living French circus founder and owner of the circus of this name, the great grandmother of the famous and unrivalled wild beasts trainer Gilbert Houcke, now with the Roland Circus touring West Germany. The diary also mentions Mlle. Virginia, the famous rider Kenebel, one of the most famous circus stars hundred years ago, Auriol, the unrivalled French clown, the best paid circus artist of that period, also Leonard is mentioned in the diary, the great grandfather of the clowns Leonhard who today are in partnership with the French circus Pinder. Last not least Baucher, the then worldfamous highschoolrider with his famous horses Rufus, Giralda and Blackwich, and the famous trainer Franconi. The almost complete history of the European Circus is represented in this unique Log Book of a Circus Ring. And this fact makes this diary dear to everyone who loves the circus and its pioneers.

But the First German Circus Museum endeavors to keep with the time and adds to the collection not old, time honored books, posters and prints only, but also all the new published books that deal with circus, artists and circus lore. Recently Dillenberg added some new books to his already large library, namely: "Circus" by H. Orlando, the Swedish circusowner, Brazil Jack: 'Pa Mitt Rios Nojesfaeld, "Acrobat—Oh" by Charlie Rivels, the famous Clown. These books are published in Stockholm and written in Swedish. —Years ago Paula Busch wrote her quite unique and most amusing book "Wasser Minna" it was a bestseller then. A second edition, re-edited by the authoresss, Paula Busch, the circus owner and daughter of the famous circus manager Paul Busch in Berlin just came out and sells like hotdogs in the bookshops So, Dillenberg bought it too, as it is a book no friend of the circus should miss.—

NEW MEMBERS

Nat D. Hull, No. 534
1756 A Ave., N. E.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Lloyd W. Bender, No. 535
131 N. Third St.,
Steubenville, Ohio

Charles John Furman, No. 536
Box 50
Danvers State Hospital
Hathorne, Mass.

The Dutch state airlines report success in minimizing the nervousness of elephants being flown to zoos, by having hens perch on the animals' backs while en route.

—Courtesy N. Y. Times

STATE DEPARTMENT IN ACTION

In **Lying in State** Stanton Griffis, former Ambassador to Poland, to Egypt, to Argentina and to Spain, writes:

Probably the most amusing picture of the State Department at work is the comparison of its operations with the love life of elephants, attributed to Bob Lovett. The analogy falls into three phases of comparisons: the first, that all important business is done at a very high level; secondly, that any developments are accompanied by tremendous trumpeting; and thirdly, that if any results are accomplished, the period required is from 18 months to two years.

—Published by Doubleday

Circus Week Swing Into Arena

National Circus Week, June 1-7, sponsored each year by the Circus Clown Club of America, has already polished up the Band Wagon and enlisted a corp of tub thumpers for its annual tour.

Among participating organizations are the National Association of Gag Writers, whose Laugh Week precedes, coming April 1-8.

"Fools of the World" are uniting to keep a smile on the "Map of America" and to bring back the old time flavor of the American clown and comedian so sorely needed in these days of unrest.

Members of the Circus Historical Society whose creed is the preservation of the history of the American circus are given an opportunity through their local newspapers, magazines and other associates to help spread the cheer of the CIRCUS.

Remember the "Hurricanes of Howling Hilarity" of a half a century ago? "The youngsters of this generation will soon have passed into manhood and womanhood with the relish of capering Clowns caprices without the help of those interested in the circus" said Ray Bickford of Bernardston, Mass., chairman of National Circus Week, "unless all interested in the American Circus keep the red wagons rolling and the Circus on the road."

Known professionally as "Rayford the Clown," the chairman has worked in the promotion of "The Greatest Show on Earth," Cecil B. DeMille movie, and that of Red Skelton in "The Clown."

In every community independent and chain stores are only waiting for some local approach, such as the display of circus models, clown participation or the gentle hint to take part.

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These people should be more than willing to participate in the 7th Annual Circusiana Exhibit to be held at the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts from June 28th thru July 31, 1953. The display will occupy one of the largest galleries on the main floor this year with all models, etc., shown under glass. All members are being asked to contribute at least one item from their collection. Again this year there will be a photography contest, all persons interested in this part of the exhibit should write to Samuel J. Weston, 30 West Potomac St., Williamsport, Maryland, for the complete set of rules. All others desiring information contact P. R. Hemphill, Jr., 32 South Mulberry Street, Hagerstown, Maryland. Items for display should be shipped to the museum to arrive not later than June 27, 1953.

Merle Evans, Municipal Band Bring the Circus to Elkhart

Sent in by Eugene Russell, No. 433

Memories of tinsel, sawdust and the big top were awakened for a capacity audience of 1,700 persons Sunday afternoon at the EHS auditorium as Merle Evans, dean of circus bandmasters, directed the Elkhart Municipal band in its first concert of the year. Evans has been director of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus band for 34 years, and has never missed a performance.

Ross Davis, director of the Nappanee High School band and newly elected director of the Municipal band, opened the program with the "Ringling Bros. Grand Entry," written by Al Sweet, an early circus band leader. It was followed by "River Jordan," a fantasy on Negro spirituals written by Maurice C. Whitney.

Davis then surrendered the baton to Joseph Erskine, recently elected associate director of both the municipal band and the city's symphony orchestra. Erskine led the band in its rendition of "Pas des Fleurs."

Novel Introduction

Evans was introduced in a novel manner. As Ross Davis returned to the stand to direct the band in "March Symphonica," the stage lights were darkened and eight school girls twirling lighted batons and followed by a clown came down the center aisle to the front of the stage. The lights were turned on, and Evans was observed directing the band, while Davis had disappeared. Evans, incidentally, composed "March Symphonica."

Les Waddington, program commentator, then spoke briefly of Evans' career which began back in 1916 when Evans had charge of the band for the 101 Ranch Wild West show, featuring the late Buffalo Bill. At present, Evans is the second oldest employee of the combined circuses.

Tells Highlights

Following the introduction, Evans led the band in a musical paraphrase of "My Grandfather's Clock," and scenes from "Maytime," by Romberg. This was followed by the march from the motion picture, "Greatest Show on Earth," the "Lady of Spain," by Evans, and a special arrangement of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," which the audience especially enjoyed.

In a short talk, Evans told of the highlights of his long circus career. He spoke of his extensive travel, of his recent visit

to Cuba, his work in making of the picture "Greatest Show on Earth," and his observations of some of the strange personalities that comprise the circus world.

Evans said that a circus band is the "clock of the show." The music, which includes over 200 numbers during the show, is selected and timed for each act, setting the pace for the entire performance. Moreover, the music is subject to split second changes as acts enter and leave the rings.

To illustrate this, Evans grouped six numbers under the general title of "Circus Music." Frank Reed acted as ringmaster, and each time he blew a whistle, the band stopped, then instantly began the following number.

Start With March

"Circus Music" got under way with a march, "Entry of the Gladiators," used for elephant processions. Next came "Jungle Queen," an oriental melody, slow and mystical, and used in acts featuring lions and tigers. It was followed by the fast moving cake walk "Georgia Girl."

"Bull Trombone," a tune that evoked visions of cavorting clowns, preceded a waltz, "Spring, Beautiful Spring," that almost always accompanies trapeze or high wire acts. The last number was a galop, "Eclipse," that denoted races.

The concert closed with Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever"—the "disaster march" of the circus—unscheduled music that tells performers and attendants to get to their posts and dismiss the audience because something has happened.

Hartford Fire

Evans never hears the march without remembering the afternoon of July 6, 1944, at Hartford, Conn., when he suddenly noticed a small spot of fire near the top of the big tent during a performance. He struck up the "disaster march," and at the first notes the alerted trainers drove their lions and tigers desperately through the runways. The flash fire spread rapidly, leaving a death toll of 169 persons.

The circus effect at Sunday's concert was increased by Don Wright's appearance as a clown, and by circus posters in the halls and on the stairway leading to the auditorium.

Jaycees served as ushers for the performance.

V.G.

—Reprinted from Elkhart Truth, 1-19-53

Opening Day, April 18, 1953

By the Editor

"Mother, there here," cried Ann. "Who? What? What Time Is It?", replied a sleepy voice. "Daddy and them" was the anguished reply. This at 6 A.M. on a snowy morning in April.

The ground was covered with two inches of snow when Bob drove up with Clarence Schulz and Charlie Sherwood of Janesville, Wisc. Bob had stayed in Greenville all night, returning to Richmond to pick up the boys at the Richmond railroad station. After some scurrying Ann and I dressed and got breakfast on the table. We were on the road to Greenville at 7:30 A.M. Greenville lot is only 26 miles from our house, so in short time we were there. The beautiful new top looked even more white with the snow on it. Charlie Sherwood was only too glad to borrow a top coat from Bob, but by night time we were all frozen too much to care any more. We visited on the lot and at the James Hotel with various fans and fellow members including the Conovers, George Piercy, John Boyle, Robert Wyatt, new member Lloyd Bender and others. Went to the hospital to visit with our dear friend Fred Stafford, who was able to be out for the banquet and night show. The show which we will review in a later issue was good—the elephants are always the King favorite. After the banquet Ann returned to Richmond with the Olsen's of Indianapolis. Bob and I took Bob Horstman to the Vandalia Airport some 40 miles from the lot and missed the first part of the night show. After the show Bob insisted on staying until the tent was down and loaded. The only thing that drug him away was the fact that we had to get the Wisconsinites back to Richmond to get a 1 o'clock train. We only just made it and then home to find Ann just getting in from her dance. Nineteen hours of circus and we'd do it every Saturday.

IN THE CENTER RING: BIRD IMITATIONS

Courtesy Quik Magazine

New York City circus aerialists got unscheduled competition when Celso Lorenzo, 33, arose from his front row second balcony seat, stepped across the guard rail, grabbed a wire in the rigging and swung toward the arena. Clear of first balcony and main level seats, he clung to the wire with one hand, waved cheerily with the other. Lorenzo fell to the sawdust, later walked smilingly to an ambulance. Only damage to the high flier: a cracked rib.

Do any of you know the addresses of:

Marvin W. Krieger, Jr.

Chris K. Audibert

Harry B. Chipman

Mail has been returned from these people.

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Convention News

Polack Bros. Circus while playing Norfolk for the Shrine Temple, Convention Chairman Dr. C. S. Karland invited the following members of the Circus Historical Society who are on the show to a meeting to discuss plans for the forthcoming Convention, August 7-8-9, 1953.

Henry Keyes, Edythe Boyd and Mr. Boyd laid out the circus band music to be played at the Convention and Nate Lewis, the Equestrian director, suggested a grand surprise finish as an added feature, this will be accomplished and it will be a big surprise, no doubt about it.

It was decided to have a parade in which Consolvo Tent, Saints and Sinners will join as Mr. Karland is a member of this Tent and has produced shows for them.

The exhibit rooms will be decorated as well as the hotel lobby and at the banquet a full circus performance will be given with a circus band, calliope and all the trimmings to make it a very colorful event.

The Saints and Sinners are noted for their fine clown make-ups and have made a big hit at every convention of the said Saints and Sinners. Karland furnished the calliopes and a band for the last one in Richmond, Va.

The Convention will be held in the Monticello Hotel with air conditioned rooms and a fine banquet will be served.

There will be sight seeing trips arranged to points of historical interest for those who wish to go on them.

There will be bathing parties, too, for those who wish to cool off in the fine beaches and possibly a beach party and fish fry for all. This will be decided later as the program unfolds.

Mr. and Mrs. Davis of Colonial Heights, Va., Jack Hair, formerly with the Nelson Family in the old Barnum Show, George and Lurline Brietz the Magicians, Martha Carr, formerly with the Karland Circus, Joe Sterling, former equestrian director for the Karland shows, Mr. Cartright, an old circus troupier, Dr. L. G. Holland, a famous clown of Suffolk, Va., L. C. Weygint, a member, and others are on the committee to assist Mr. Karland in the parade and show in general.

This promises to be a nice Convention as all are taking an interest and many of the general public has asked for banquet tickets and their wishes will be granted to have a nice big audience for the performers to entertain.

We are assured that Dad White and Mr. Murray of Jeannette, Pa., will be on hand as no convention will be complete without those two old timers.

Added suggestions from the members are invited, so come along with your ideas.

As it stands now the parade will have about thirty cars filled with clowns, a band wagon, air calliope, bunch of horses and a steam calliope to bring up the rear as usual.

Jack Hair, the present equestrian director of the Karland Shows, will see that refreshments are available in the exhibit rooms as he is one of the Supervisors of the Coca-Cola Company in Norfolk. He is working his head off to make it a success and will have several old time showmen at the banquet.



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The above paintings are the work of Charles Amidon, 17 Walker Street, Orange, Massachusetts.

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